

# Implementing Trauma-Sensitive Schools and Social and Emotional Learning to Address Chronic Absenteeism



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The SEAC Peer-to-Peer Network recently hosted its eighth session, titled “Implementing Trauma-Sensitive Schools and Social and Emotional Learning to Address Chronic Absenteeism.” The session discussed the current landscape and data surrounding student mental health, the connection between mental health and chronic absenteeism, conditions that foster learning and improve student outcomes, and a framework that integrates trauma-sensitive schools (TSS) and social-emotional learning (SEL) approaches.

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The session began with grounding the current landscape of student mental health and the student experience, including data around mental health needs and issues such as suicide and suicidal ideation. Data drawn from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study \(2022\)](#) illustrate the scope of the problem. For example, 44 percent of youth reported they persistently felt sad or hopeless during the 2020-2021. More than half (55 percent) reported they had experienced emotional abuse, and 11 percent said they had experienced physical abuse by a parent or another adult in the home.

A U.S. Department of Education [report](#) released in 2021 on student social-emotional behavioral and mental health adds another perspective. The report notes that when students face mental health challenges, their unmet mental health needs may manifest behaviors inconsistent with the expectations of their school or program. Students of color who exhibit these behaviors are more likely to experience reactive and exclusionary discipline rather than interventions and additional supports. This can affect students’ experience of feeling safe and supported at school. Students with disabilities and students of various religious backgrounds are also disproportionately affected by these challenges.

The remainder of the session and breakout rooms covered how the integration of TSS and SEL can address these challenges. To buffer the impacts of trauma, schools can implement a schoolwide strategy that promotes policies and practices designed to encourage resilience. This strategy can be coupled with SEL, which is the process of developing and using skills, mindsets, and knowledge to help students navigate their environment. SEL includes the ability to identify emotions, develop and maintain a sense of self-identity, and maintain positive relationships.

The session further discussed the need for a robust approach to equity to create conditions for learning. This approach counters inequality, institutionalized privilege, prejudice, and systemic deficits and promotes thriving for those experiencing inequity and injustice by providing access to SEL and cognitive learning experiences.

The full session is available to view on Zoom using [this link](#). Please use passcode “?NjG1kaE” to access the recording.

Additional resources shared during the session are linked below\*:

- ▶ [CASEL's 3 Signature Practices Playbook](#)
- ▶ [Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Needs](#)
- ▶ [CDC Survey of High School Student Mental Health During COVID-19](#)
- ▶ [Using Chronic Absence Data to Improve Conditions for Learning](#)
- ▶ [Trauma-Sensitive Schools and Social Emotional Learning Integration Brief](#)
- ▶ [Video Collection on Student and Trauma-Informed Practice](#)
- ▶ [Best Practices Clearinghouse on Safe and Supportive Schools](#)
- ▶ [Racial Justice in Education Resource Guide](#)
- ▶ [Graphic Organizer for Adult SEL](#)

*\*Disclaimer: The resources and materials listed here are for informational purposes only and their inclusion does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education.*